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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed the quality of reporting of public opinion polls in six selected newspapers during the final 65 days of the 1988 presidential campaign. The eight disclosure standards used were based upon the latest version of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) code of Professional Ethics and Practices. The newspapers selected for this study were: the Arkansas Gazette, The Atlanta Constitution, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, USA Today and The Washington Post. A total of 156 reports on polls were discovered in the 6 newspapers. The numbers ranged from a high of 48 poll reports in USA Today to only 9 in the Chicago Tribune. The newspapers reported sponsor (81%), sample size (57%), and population sampled (54%) more often than other disclosure standards. Timing was reported in 45% of the items, and method of contacting respondents was reported in 29%. The lowest disclosure rates were for sampling error (10%), response rate (6%) and wording (4%). Seldom did a report on a poll appear on an opinion page: 97% appeared on news pages; 31% appeared on page one. The 156 items concerning polls that were discovered in the newspapers' 372 issues over the 65-day period provide an overall average of a poll report in 42% of the issues. Findings suggest that news judgment should go beyond determining interest and importance; it should also include a determination of the legitimacy of the information. (Twenty-nine endnotes and eight tables of data are included.) (MG)

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Down to the Wire: How Six Newspapers Reported Public Opinion
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Abstract

Down to the Wire: How Six Newspapers Reported Public Opinion Polls During the 1988 Presidential Campaign

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This study found that newspapers fell short in the quality of reporting of polls, as measured by eight standards, during the final 65 days of the 1988 presidential campaign.

The newspapers reported poll sponsorship 81 percent of the time; sample size, 57 percent; definition of exact population sampled, 54 percent; specific dates poll was conducted, 45 percent; method of contacting respondents, 29 percent; sampling error, 10 percent; response rate, 6 percent; and wording of questions, 4 percent.

Chi-Square tests showed significant differences among the newspapers in how well they reported four of the standards: sample size, population, dates and method. The newspapers' source of information resulted in significant differences in reporting sample size, population and dates. Placement also resulted in significant differences in reporting sample size and dates: items on page 1 reported these standards better than did items on inside pages.

A Chi-Square test indicated a significant difference in overall performance of the newspapers. USA Today, which had the most items about polls (48) but many shorter items, had the lowest level of overall conformity. For the eight standards combined, USA Today averaged only a 23 percent rate of conformity to the standards. The newspaper with the fewest items, the Chicago Tribune, had the highest level of conformity (46 percent). Other newspapers in the study and their overall level of conformity: The Atlanta Constitution, 45 percent; Los Angeles Times, 42 percent; The Washington Post 41 percent; and the Arkansas Gazette, 40 percent.

Down to the Wire: How Six Newspapers Reported
Public Opinion Polls During the 1988 Presidential Campaign

News items about the results of public opinion polls and about how the press covered the polls pervaded the news media during the 1988 presidential election. The prevalence of public opinion polls in news reporting during presidential election years has increased greatly since the 1936 race, the first one in which the Gallup organization took political surveys,¹ but this has not been heralded as an improvement in political reporting. Instead, increases in both the taking of polls and reporting about them have been deplored by many outside and inside the journalism community. Opponents contend that the polls and subsequent reporting about them tend to trivialize the political process. However, proponents say poll reporting helps the electorate because it helps voters pinpoint important issues and trends.

When newspapers report results of polls, the newspapers have a responsibility to do a thorough job--just as they have this obligation in their other reporting. How well newspapers cover results of polls, especially election polls during the final days of a presidential campaign, is important because the completeness or incompleteness of that reporting will have a bearing upon the knowledge that voters take with them when they go to cast their ballots. Hence, the authors of this study sought to determine how well newspapers report polls.

The increase in poll reporting is partly attributable to

the spate of polls conducted in behalf of the nation's network news organizations and prominent newspapers. For example, during the 1988 election, polls were conducted for CBS-New York Times, NBC-Wall Street Journal, ABC-Washington Post, the Cable News Network, the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune, and The Atlanta Constitution. Many other media organizations also sponsored polls.²

Some authors say the increase in poll reporting was a logical outgrowth of the so-called "precision journalism" movement in the 1970s.³ The term stems from a book of the same title by Philip Meyer. It emphasized social science research methods for journalists. The premise as stated in the preface was that "as our society becomes more intricate, we must find more intricate tools to describe and interpret it."⁴

Other journalism texts such as Handbook of Reporting Methods by McCombs, Shaw, and Grey began including chapters specifically addressing the question of how to report surveys and polls intelligently and clearly.⁵ That book introduced journalists to poll disclosure standards adopted in 1969 by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). The standards include such items as disclosure of the sponsor of a poll, exact wording of questions, the size of the sample, and a discussion of the precision of the findings, such as sampling error.⁶ McCombs urged journalists to pay attention to AAPOR guidelines when they reported on polls, but noted that much reporting of poll results did not conform to the standards.⁷

More than a decade after that book was published, critics

continue to charge that journalists' increasingly heavy reliance on polls is inappropriate, and that reporters have become mesmerized by the numbers.⁸ Detractors say that journalists are inclined to report in-house polls largely because of bragging rights about exclusivity of poll results rather than because of any intrinsic value the polls might have for the public.⁹ They find further fault with the polls and poll reporting, saying that favorable polls for one candidate could result in low voter turnout on election day,¹⁰ and that there is a dangerous tendency for politicians and party leaders to rely on polls to make policy decisions.¹¹

Some critics of reporting about polls note the use of the "horse-race metaphor" whereby "who's ahead-who's behind" stories may tend to obscure more important campaign issues and can lead to distortion about the race in the minds of the public.¹²

Others decry the use of exit polls such as occurred in the 1980 presidential election to forecast election outcomes,¹³ and some critics complain that the validity of poll results is diminished because the response rate for most polls has fallen to slightly more than 60 percent.¹⁴ Finally, detractors charge that polls reduce the dignity of the presidential race: "The pollsters have taken an electoral process that people once fought and died for and made it the moral equivalent of the Pepsi taste test."¹⁵

Meanwhile, poll proponents contend that the information provided by polls is an asset to American society because it helps identify important issues and trends.¹⁶ C. Anthony Broh said that even the "horse-race metaphor" has one potential

positive effect--making the presidential race more exciting and thereby increasing public interest in the political process.¹⁷ If it is true that reporting about polls serves the public in these ways, then it is critical that the polling information be presented clearly to the body politic, and this responsibility falls largely upon the journalists who report the polls. How do journalists handle poll stories, and how prevalent are reports about results of polls in news coverage?

When James Glen Stovall and Jacqueline H. Solomon conducted a content analysis of 50 daily newspapers' coverage of the 1980 presidential campaign, they concluded that approximately 15 percent of the total number of news stories about the 1980 presidential election focused on polls.¹⁸ The authors said that public opinion polls were not a dominant part of election campaign coverage even during the final two weeks of the campaign.¹⁹

Mark Miller and Robert Hurd examined poll reports in The Atlanta Constitution, the Chicago Tribune, and the Los Angeles Times for conformity to the previously-mentioned AAPOR poll reporting guidelines. They found that of the AAPOR guidelines studied, conformity was greatest in reporting sample size (85 percent of the time) and sponsorship (82 percent), and only slightly lower for definition of population sampled (79 percent). They complained that sampling error, a more important indicator of poll accuracy, was reported only 16 percent of the time.²⁰ They also found that conformity to AAPOR standards involving wording of questions, sample error, and method of contacting

respondents was highest for polls sponsored by the newspapers themselves rather than those produced by outside sources.²¹ They concluded that "newspaper editors do not see the methodological details required for conformity to AAPOR reporting standards as automatically worthy of highly valued news space."²²

Paletz, et al examined every poll in The New York Times and on two television networks during 1973, 1975, and 1977.²³ While the study did not focus on AAPOR disclosure guidelines per se, it did indicate that identification of one guideline, poll sponsorship, did not appear in 75 percent of the Times polls.²⁴ Conversely, the Times did disclose sample size in 67 percent of the stories.²⁵

Michael Salwen also was interested in how newspapers conform to AAPOR guidelines for poll reporting. He analyzed 264 poll stories published in two Detroit daily newspapers from July 25 to the Monday before the election during presidential election years from 1968 to 1984 to see whether the newspapers showed marked improvement over the years in conforming to the guidelines.²⁶ He found that over the period studied, 96 percent of the stories about polls reported the poll sponsor, 76 percent reported the population, 72 percent reported sample size, and 30 percent reported sampling error. Results showed that only 28 percent reported question wording, and merely 6 percent reported response rate.²⁷ Overall, there was increased reporting of the definition of the population sampled and sampling error. Conversely, variables such as question wording and timing did not show improvement during the years.²⁸

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the quality of reporting of polls, as measured by eight disclosure standards, in six selected newspapers during the final 65 days of the 1988 presidential campaign.

The eight disclosure standards were based upon the latest version of the AAPOR Code of Professional Ethics and Practices, a March 1986 revision, with modifications to clarify definitions of poll reporting standards for this study. These standards were used for two reasons. One was ease of comparison with previous studies on the same subject, and the other was a subjective assessment by the authors that the AAPOR guidelines, when followed, contribute to completeness and clarity in news stories about polls. A corollary to this assessment is that the omission of some of the information in the guidelines may result in incomplete reporting and a disservice to the newspaper reader. Since this study was completed, there has been an indication from the newspaper industry that it has a growing concern for high standards concerning research. The Newspaper Research Council in 1989 adopted a Code of Professional Ethics and Practice that includes minimal disclosure standards that are similar to the AAPOR guidelines.²⁹

The newspapers selected for this study were the Arkansas Gazette, The Atlanta Constitution, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, USA Today and The Washington Post. The Constitution, Tribune and Times were selected because they were the newspapers used by Miller and Hurd in their study and because the newspapers are published in three distinct sections of the nation, the Southeast, the Midwest and the West, respectively. The Post was selected not only because it is an Eastern newspaper but also because it is in the nation's capital, thereby providing the opportunity to determine whether a major

newspaper located in the seat of government emphasized election polls more than other newspapers around the nation during a campaign season. USA Today was selected because it is Gannett's self-proclaimed national newspaper, and to determine whether its coverage differed from regional newspapers, especially another Gannett-owned newspaper. The Gazette was selected as the other Gannett newspaper because it is in the Southwest and is published in the authors' locale, Little Rock, Ark.

The newspapers for the last 65 days of the presidential campaign, Sept. 5, Labor Day, through Nov. 11, election day, were examined because this time period is widely regarded as the general election season, an interval during which it was thought that many newspaper reports on polls would be available, thus providing an adequate sample.

Five journalism graduate students were trained to select newspaper articles and stand-alone graphics that primarily focused on reporting results of polls. Items in which polls were only peripherally mentioned were excluded. An entire report on a poll in one issue of a newspaper was considered a single item, whether it consisted of only an article, only graphics, or an article with accompanying art. Items that admitted polls were non-scientific were excluded. All news and opinion sections of the newspapers were examined. Sports, society, food and other special sections were excluded.

The newspapers were randomly selected for each student and the selection permitted each student to examine an approximately equal number of issues of each newspaper. An independent checker examined a random selection of 20 percent of the newspapers studied by each student and found no instances in which original checkers had failed to select an item appropriate for this study.

The five graduate students were trained to code the selected items,

based upon these disclosure standards:

1. Sample size (the total number of persons questioned);
2. Sponsor (the organization that had the survey done);
3. Wording (complete wording of all the questions on which results were reported in the newspaper item);
4. Sampling error (percentage of error at some statistical level of confidence);
5. Definition of exact population sampled (adults 18 and older, registered voters, etc.);
6. Method of contacting respondents to obtain interviews (by phone, by mail, in person, etc.);
7. Timing (the specific dates when the poll was conducted);
8. Response rate (proportion of respondents contacted who actually responded).

The random selection of items for each student to code permitted each student to examine an approximately equal proportion of the total poll items from each newspaper. The independent checker coded a random selection of 20 percent of the items coded by each student. A high degree of agreement in coding was found: The intercoder reliability measure was better than 95 percent for seven of the standards, and it was better than 90 percent for definition of exact population.

Chi-Square tests were applied to determine significant differences in reporting of disclosure standards by the newspapers, by election vs. non-election polls, by source of polls (in-house, wire service, syndicate or other), by news pages vs. opinion pages, by page 1 vs. inside placement and by publication day of the week.

Findings and Results

One hundred fifty-six reports on polls were discovered in the six newspapers. The number ranged from a high of 48 poll reports, many of them brief items, in USA Today to only nine in the Chicago Tribune. Only 3 percent of the total poll reports consisted exclusively of graphics without accompanying story.

The newspapers reported sponsor, sample size and population sampled more often than other disclosure standards. Rates of conformity with standards were sponsor, 81 percent; size, 57 percent; population, 54 percent. Other standards were reported in less than 50 percent of the items. Timing (when the polls were conducted) was reported in 45 percent of the items, and method of contacting respondents was reported in 29 percent. The lowest disclosure rates were for sampling error, 10 percent; response rate, 6 percent; and wording, 4 percent.

Significant differences were found among the newspapers in reporting four of the standards: sample size, population, timing (dates the polls were conducted) and method of contacting respondents. USA Today, with its shorter items, reported these standards less frequently than did other newspapers. (Table 1 shows conformity to standards for all six newspapers.)

A majority of the 156 items (88 percent) concerned election polls. No significant differences were found in reporting election and non-election polls. (Table 2 shows election vs. non-election polls.)

The newspapers' source of information about polls resulted in significant differences in reporting of sample size, population and timing (when the polls were conducted). The newspapers tended to report these standards more frequently when the polls were in-house (sponsored by the

newspaper) or from the wire services, and less frequently when the information came from syndicates or other sources.

Half of the items about polls were classified as other (not identified as in-house polls, or from wire services or syndicates), and many of these were brief stories, thus less likely to carry as much detail about methodology. One-third of the poll items concerned in-house polls and often were long articles.

In the analysis of how source of information affected adherence to the disclosure standards, the sponsorship variable was excluded because it was assumed (correctly) that the newspapers would report the sponsorship of their own polls. (Table 3 shows conformity to standards by source.)

Only 3 percent of the poll items appeared on opinion pages. The only apparently vast difference in reporting standards on news pages and on opinion pages was in identification of sponsor, but the Chi-Square test for significant difference is not appropriate because of the limited frequency of poll articles on opinion pages. While 83 percent of the news-page items identified sponsor of the polls, only 25 percent of the opinion-page items revealed sponsor. (Table 4 shows news pages vs. opinion pages.)

Thirty-one percent of the poll items appeared on page 1. Likewise, 31 percent of the items jumped. However, this does not mean that all page 1 items jumped because some articles on inside pages also jumped. Significant differences were found in the higher percentages for reporting sample size and dates of surveys in page 1 items than in items on inside pages. (Table 5 shows page 1 vs. inside pages.)

Cell sizes were too small to report Chi-Square values to determine whether publication day of the week affected degree of conformity to the disclosure standards. Nevertheless, an inspection of the data indicates very

little difference by day of the week regarding the standards. Also, a one-sample Chi-Square test indicated there was no significant difference in the number of polls reported on different days of the week. (Table 6 shows conformity to standards by day of the week.)

Since significant differences had been established among the newspapers in reporting four of the standards, it was decided to compare the overall performance of the six newspapers. Each newspaper's scores for the eight standards were averaged to determine their overall percentage of conformity in to the standards. A Chi-Square test indicated a significant difference in overall performance of the newspapers.

The three newspapers that had been studied earlier by Miller and Hurd, the Chicago Tribune, The Atlanta Constitution and the Los Angeles Times, were first, second and third, respectively, in degree of overall conformity to the disclosure standards. The Washington Post did not fare as well as might be expected for a major newspaper in the nation's capital. It came in fourth. Interestingly, Gannett's newspaper in Little Rock, the Arkansas Gazette, at fifth place, did nearly twice as well as Gannett's national newspaper, USA Today.

The degree of conformity was less than 50 percent for all of the newspapers, ranging from 46 percent for the Chicago Tribune to 23 percent for USA Today. (Table 7 shows percentage of overall conformity to the eight standards by newspaper.)

There appears to be a significant inverse relationship between the rank order of the number of polls reported in a newspaper and the rank order of the percentage of conformity to the standards (Spearman's $r = .83$, $p < .05$). That is, a newspaper that reported the most polls, (USA Today, 48 reports on polls), was likely to be the newspaper that also had the lowest percentage of

conformity to the standards (USA Today, 23 percent conformity). (Figure 1 shows relationship of number of polls reported to percentage of overall conformity to the eight standards.)

One possible interpretation of this finding would be that as a newspaper increases the number of poll results that it published, the less careful it becomes in observing the standards. However, care should be exercised in interpreting this finding. USA Today published many short stories about polls, and it is therefore not surprising that it had the lowest conformity to the standards.

If USA Today is removed from the analysis, the rank order correlation falls to .70 and is not significant at the .05 level. In addition, the difference in number of polls reported for the other five newspapers is 22 (ranging from nine in the Chicago Tribune to 31 in The Washington Post, but the difference in conformity is only six percentage points (ranging from 46 percent for the Tribune to 40 percent for the Gazette). Thus, it appears that a good deal of change in one variable does not result in great change in the other. Hence, it appears that while limited length of articles has an adverse effect upon conformity to standards, number of articles published does not.

Summary and Discussion

The newspapers' score for quality of reporting polls was high on only one of the eight variables, sponsorship, which was reported 81 percent of the time.

The newspapers did not do as well for sample size (57 percent), population (54 percent), timing (45 percent) and method of contacting

respondents (29 percent). Significant differences among the newspapers were found in how well they reported these four standards.

The lowest scores were for reporting sampling error (10 percent), response rate (6 percent) and exact wording of questions (4 percent).

A majority of the items (88 percent) were about election polls. One-third of the items concerned in-house polls, and the newspapers tended to report sample size more frequently in their own polls than in polls from wire services, syndicates or other sources.

Seldom did a report on a poll appear on an opinion page: Ninety-seven percent appeared on news pages. Thirty-one percent appeared on page 1, where sample size and timing were reported more frequently than on inside pages. It appeared that day of publication did not affect quality of reporting.

A Chi-Square test indicated a significant difference in overall performance of the newspapers, but none of the six newspapers in the study did well in conforming to the disclosure standards. In fact, when each newspaper's scores for the eight standards were averaged, none of the newspapers averaged 50 percent overall conformity. While only nine articles reporting the results of polls were found in the Chicago Tribune, that newspaper did have the highest overall score for conformity to the standards (46 percent). On the other hand, USA Today published the most articles about poll results (48) and had the lowest level of overall conformity (23 percent).

A Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for the six newspapers revealed a significant inverse relationship between number of poll reports and percentage of conformity, indicating that the more poll reports a newspaper published the less likely it was to conform to the standards. However, when the test was run with only five newspapers, excluding USA Today, the rank order correlation was not significant.

The poor performance by USA Today in conforming to the disclosure standards may be attributed more to its publication of many brief items--too short to include many of the disclosure standards--than to its total number of items. Therefore, further study is recommended to examine more fully the possibility of a relationship between number of stories about polls and poor performance in reporting. In the meantime, it appears that limited length of published stories is more of a factor than total number of stories published in affecting conformity to the standards.

The high rate of reporting of poll sponsorship (81 percent of the time) was similar to the earlier findings of Miller and Hurd (82 percent) and Salwen (96 percent).

This study also matched findings in the earlier studies in that sample size and population were the other most frequently reported standards. However, this present study found lower percentages (in the mid-50 percent range) for these disclosure standards than did the previous studies. Miller and Hurd placed both standards in the neighborhood of 80 percent, and Salwen found both in the 70-percent range.

Although the rates of reporting sampling error were low in the Miller and Hurd (16 percent) and Salwen (30 percent) studies, they were even lower in the present study (10 percent), indicating that the newspapers today are not doing as good a job in reporting this standard as did the newspapers in the earlier studies. It is likely that reporters and editors at newspapers often leave out sampling error, if they have this information available to them, because they do not believe readers are familiar with the related terms and how to interpret them.

Likewise, the low reporting of response rate (6 percent in both the current study and the Salwen study) may be the result of a belief by

journalists that readers do not care or do not understand. However, this may be a mistake in that the better educated readers often realize they are cheated by the lack of certain specific information in news stories.

The limited reporting of exact wording of questions (4 percent in this study and 28 percent in Salwen's) may result from journalists' perception that a list of poll questions would not interest readers and would fill news space that could be devoted to more interesting or more important matters. However, while space is a valued commodity, clarity in reporting should be a more valued one, and it is suggested that newspapers should pay more attention to reporting the exact wording of those questions on which they report poll results.

In fact, if newspapers' stories routinely included all eight disclosure standards, along with clearly understandable definitions of the standards, they would be serving two of the purposes of journalism: reporting the news fully and educating the readers. It might well be that many of the readers would not read the explanatory information, but if it were placed at the bottom of the stories or in information graphics it would be available to them. This full reporting is especially important for election polls since the conventional wisdom is that readers base their voting decisions, at least in part, on information that they receive from the media.

The 156 items concerning polls that were discovered in the newspapers' 372 issues over the 65-day period provides an overall average of a poll report in 42 percent of the issues. It is possible that the sheer number of polls available to newspapers (from their in-house efforts, the wire services, the well-known national polling organizations and a multitude of other sources, including persons and organizations with vested interests in the outcomes of polls) is the reason so many poll stories appear in the newspapers.

Newspapers should exercise greater news judgment in determining what polls to report and how to report them. The newspapers could use the eight standards to determine the value of a poll. Since the newspapers have a responsibility to do a thorough job of gathering the news, they should seek complete information from the pollsters concerning the eight standards. When the person(s) releasing the polls are unable or unwilling to disclose these vital facts, the newspapers should point out the absence of this information and the fact that this incompleteness adversely affects the credibility of the poll if the newspaper decides to publish the poll results.

Newspapers should not just rush into reporting polls indiscriminately and incompletely because the competition may do so. News judgment must go beyond determining interest and importance; it must include a determination of the legitimacy of the information.

Endnotes

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²John W. Mashek, Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 26, 1988, p. 15A.

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¹⁴Richard Morin, Washington Post, Oct. 16, 1988, p. C4.

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¹⁶USA Today, Oct. 20, 1988, p. 6A.

¹⁷Broh, p. 527.

¹⁸Stovall and Solomon, p. 615.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 622.

²⁰M. Mark Miller and Robert Hurd, "Conformity to AAPOR Standards in Newspaper Reporting of Public Opinion Polls," Public Opinion Quarterly, 46:244, 246 (Summer, 1982).

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²⁴Ibid., p. 504.

²⁵Ibid., p. 505.

²⁶Michael B. Salwen, "The Reporting of Public Opinion Polls During Presidential Election Years, 1968-1984," Journalism Quarterly, 62:273 (Summer, 1985).

²⁷Ibid., p. 275.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Debra Gersh, "Newspaper Research Council adopts code of ethics," Editor & Publisher, May 27, 1989, p. 32.

Table 1

Percentage of Reports on Polls Conforming to Standards: By Newspapers

	Arkansas n = 22	Atlanta n = 16	ChiTrib n = 9	LA Times n = 30	USAToday n = 48	WashPost n = 31	RowTotal n = 156
Size (a)	55	75	78	80	31	61	57
Sponsor (b)	73	88	100	77	79	87	81
Wording (b)	14	0	11	0	2	6	4
Error (b)	9	12	33	10	2	16	10
Population (a)	68	69	78	67	31	52	54
Method (c)	27	38	33	40	10	45	29
Timing (a)	64	56	33	57	21	55	45
Response (b)	9	19	0	3	4	3	6

(a) $p < .01$, using Chi-Square with 5 d.f.

(b) Chi-Square values were not reported because 20 percent or more of the cells had expected frequencies of 5 or less.

(c) $p < .05$, using Chi-Square with 5 d.f.

Table 2

Percentage of Reports on Polls Conforming to Standards:
Election vs. Non-election

	Election n = 137	Nonelection n = 19
Size	54	79
Sponsor (a)	80	89
Wording (a)	4	5
Error (a)	11	5
Population	52	68
Method	30	26
Timing	47	26
Response (a)	6	5

(a) Chi-Square values were not reported because 20 percent or more of the cells had expected frequencies of 5 or less.

Table 3

Percentage of Reports on Polls Conforming to Standards:
By Source

	In-house	Wire Service	Syndicate	Other
	n = 51	n = 13	n = 14	n = 78
Size (a)	82	69	57	38
Wording (b)	10	8	0	1
Error (b)	20	15	7	4
Population (a)	73	85	36	40
Method (b)	51	39	21	15
Timing (a)	67	77	50	24
Response (b)	8	15	0	4

(a) $p < .01$, using Chi-Square with 3 d.f.

(b) Chi-Square values were not reported because 20 percent or more of the cells had expected frequencies of 5 or less.

Table 4

Percentage of Reports on Polls Conforming to Standards:
News Pages vs. Opinion Pages (a)

	News Pages n = 152	Opinion Pages n = 4
Size	57	50
Sponsor	83	25
Wording	5	0
Error	11	0
Population	55	25
Method	29	50
Timing	44	75
Response	6	0

(a) Chi-Square values were not reported because 20 percent or more of the cells had expected frequencies of 5 or less.

Table 5

Percentage of Reports on Polls Conforming to Standards:
News Page 1 vs. Inside Pages

	News Page 1 n = 48	Inside Pages n = 108
Size (a)	75	49
Sponsor	81	81
Wording (c)	8	3
Error (c)	21	6
Population	65	49
Method	38	26
Timing (b)	58	39
Response (c)	8	5

(a) $p < .01$, using Chi-Square with 1 d.f.

(b) $p < .05$, using Chi-Square with 1 d.f.

(c) Chi-Square values were not reported because 20 percent or more of the cells had expected frequencies of 5 or less.

Table 6

Percentage of Reports on Polls Conforming to Standards:
By Day of the Week (a)

	Sun. n = 10	Mon. n = 22	Tue. n = 21	Wed. n = 13	Thur. n = 20	Fri. n = 11	Sat. n = 11
Size	90	68	52	77	75	82	45
Sponsor	100	73	86	69	85	82	91
Wording	10	5	10	8	5	0	0
Error	50	9	14	15	10	0	9
Population	80	68	52	77	60	82	36
Method	50	32	29	46	60	36	9
Timing	70	45	52	77	60	54	36
Response	20	0	10	8	5	0	9

(a) Chi-Square values were not reported because 20 percent or more of the cells had expected frequencies of 5 or less.

Note: This table excludes USA Today, which does not publish on Saturdays and Sundays.

Table 7

Percentage of Overall Conformity to the Eight Standards: By Newspapers

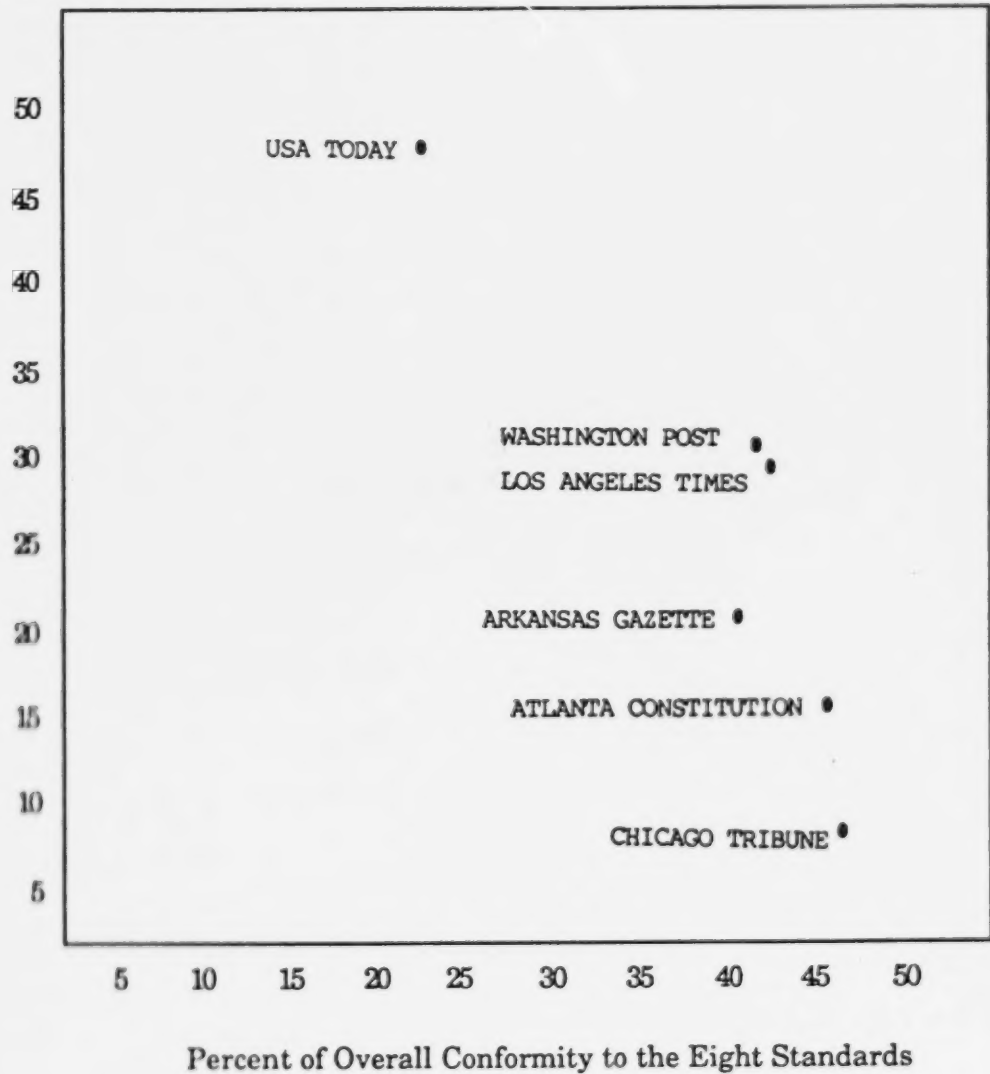
Chicago Tribune	Atlanta Constitution	Los Angeles Times	Washington Post	Arkansas Gazette	USA Today
n = 9	n = 16	n = 30	n = 31	n = 22	n = 48
46%	45 %	42%	41 %	40%	23%

$p < .01$, using Chi-Square with 5 d. f.

Figure 1

Relationship of Number of Polls Reported to Percentage of Overall Conformity to the Eight Standards

Number of Polls Reported



$r_s = .83$

$p < .05$